



STATE OF WASHINGTON  
**COMMISSION ON HISPANIC AFFAIRS**

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**Press Release**

02/05/03; Contact – Brendan von Briesen, Legislative Liaison (360) 753-3159

**Washington State  
Commission on Hispanic/Latino Affairs**

**Commission Releases 2003 Legislative Agenda**

**Focuses on Education, Racial Profiling, Health Care, and Immigration-related issues**

The WA State Commission on Hispanic/Latino Affairs is pleased to release its Legislative Agenda for 2003. The Legislative Agenda is a brief overview of some of the most important issues facing the Latino Community of Washington, as reported to the Commission during its bimonthly community meetings around the state. While the Agenda does not include recommendations for specific legislation, many of the recommendations are applicable to a number of bills. Staff also work on a number of issues not included in the Agenda: for more information on these, please feel free to contact the office for more information at 360.753.3159.

The Commission prioritizes education issues because time and time again, when asked for their legislative priorities, Latinos consistently name education as their principle area of concern. The Commission strongly recommends passage of legislation that would grant in-state tuition to all qualified Washington students. This measure would cost the state nothing and would only make the pool of applicants to colleges and universities more representative of the communities they serve. Other education issues relate to an innovative solution to the drastic shortage of qualified bilingual teachers, and the promotion of family and community involvement in education.

Another considerable concern to Latinos relates to the Police and their interactions with members of the Latino community. The Commission has worked for years on passing meaningful legislation that would prohibit the use of Racial Profiling. Unfortunately, last session's legislation was not strong enough to encourage local agencies to compile data on traffic stops. This year, the Commission is asking the State Legislature to develop a uniform, state-wide system for data collection and analysis of officer-initiated stops.

Other priorities of the community includes health care and other issues relating to immigration, including expanding the acceptance of official, Consular identification cards as a form of photo identification. There is concern that legislation may be passed which would require an applicant for a driver's license to prove their legal status in this country, an effort that would leave drivers untested and our roads and highways unsafe. This would drive further underground tens of thousands of undocumented workers who would, most likely, continue to drive without a license.

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**[Please Note: The Commission is working on a number of other issues not included in the Agenda, please feel free to contact Brendan von Briesen, the Legislative Liaison, for more information: 360.753.3159.]**

The Commission was initially created by a Governor Executive Order and established in statute in 1971. As set in state law (RCW 43.115.040) the Commission's role is to:

- Examine and define issues pertaining to the rights and needs of Hispanics and make recommendations to the governor and state agencies for changes in programs and laws;
- Advise the governor and state agencies on the development and implementation of policies, plans, and programs that relate to the special needs of Hispanics;
- Advise the legislature on issues of concern to the Hispanic community;
- Establish relationships with state agencies, local governments, and private sector organizations that promote equal opportunity and benefits for Hispanics.